Autumn 1998 ◆ Number 17

# The Women's Quarterly

## Why a Good Man Is Hard to Find

### Special issue!

*James Bowman*
on fighting men

*Jonah Goldberg*
on movie men

*Jennifer Grossman*
on rich men

*Harvey Mansfield*
on absent men

*Dave Shiflett*
on cussin' men

*Christina Hoff Sommers*
on little men

*Fareed Zakaria*
on dancing men

And more on
Men! Men! Men!

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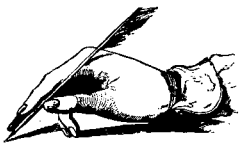
*Diary*



# Sisterhood of Sex

A California radio host made the following observation about the gullibility of the sexes: There is a certain type of woman, he noted, whom other women immediatly see through, but men always fall for—the kind who uses her sexual attractiveness to manipulate men into getting what she wants from them. So too, he said, there is a type of man whom other men immediately see through—the cad who charms women only to discard them—but women unfailingly fall for. Why, he wondered, do men and women allow themselves to be such dupes?

What the host was trying to puzzle through was the continued female support for Bill Clinton. And indeed, it puzzles—or should puzzle—all of us. Women have the most to lose from a leader who publicly flouts his marriage vows and uses the powers of his office to crudely exploit a young woman; more so if he doesn't face any consequences beyond the discomfort of making an apology. After all, if the President is allowed to get away with such behavior, why not our husbands? Or bosses?

Yet despite everything we now know about the President's conduct, women continue to hold him in higher regard than men do. According to a poll taken by the *Los Angeles Times* shortly after the release of the Starr report, some 65 percent of women remained persuaded that the President "cares about people like you," and 51 percent believed he possessed "the honesty and integrity to serve as President of the United States." Fully 60 percent of the women polled said they still had a "favorable" impression of Bill Clinton (versus 52 percent of men).

The poll findings echo the many comments ordinary women have made to reporters, saying that while they disapprove of the President's sex life, they do not believe it should disqualify him from office or be treated as anything but a private matter. Feminist icon Betty Friedan summed up this sentiment at a Washington gala in September: "We feel betrayed and have no use for this kind of arrogant sexual behavior. But on the other hand, women are not going to go along with any kind of sexual McCarthyism."

While Friedan and her sisters should be applauded for finally renouncing sexual McCarthyism (and we shall hold them to their newfound tolerance the next time a Supreme Court nominee is accused of making a smutty joke about Coke cans), we should be disturbed by the female apathy the feminists now celebrate.

Some of this apathy may be explained, as poll analysts have speculated, by the fact that women simply don't rush to judgment as quickly as men do, and that they generally tend to be less informed about current affairs than men. If you don't follow the day-in, day-out details of the case, you probably will be more inclined to dismiss the President's behavior as being "just about sex" than about perjury, obstruction of justice, etc. (Although as my husband joked, after reading the IRS' warning against perjury on his tax form, "Why should they care? It's just about money.") And it's true, too, as the radio host observed, there are certain types of men women are blind to—or at least, whose behavior they are willing to forgive (in the last century, women forgave the famous preacher Henry Ward Beecher when his adultery became public).

Still, even if the whole matter were "just about sex," you would expect women to take a dimmer view of the President than men. And I think one of the main reasons they don't is the corrosive effect feminism has had upon women's attitudes toward sex and marriage.

Sisterhood—the kind that prevailed before the modern women's movement—used to be based on the mutual protection of women in marriage. We ushered young men and women into it, and we closed ranks against those who would destroy it—the "other woman" who tempted a husband to stray; the husband who *did* stray and abandoned his family.

There was, of course, always a certain amount of hypocrisy that accompanied this social enforcement of marriage. And that was a good thing, too. We understood that not every marriage was happy. In these instances, adultery could be tolerated if the parties involved kept quiet about it, and did not publicly flaunt their illicit liasons.

Initially, Bill Clinton's adultery was tolerated. No one, after all, could be more sympathetic to his marital situation than Republicans: If married to Hillary, what man wouldn't wish for Gennifer Flowers?

It was only when Clinton flagrantly defied all standards—by turning the Oval Office into a kinky boudoir—that his sex life became a public issue.

And this is where feminists let women down. The new sisterhood is based

*Continued on page 30*



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The Women's Quarterly

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Danielle Crittenden
*Editor*

Grace Paine Terzian
*Publisher*

Mitzi Hamilton
*Art Director*

Rhonda K. Mohrmann
*Editorial Assistant*

P. O. Box 3058
Arlington, Virginia
22203-0058

Tel.: 703/558-4991
Toll Free Line: 800/224-6000
Fax: 703/558-4994
E-mail: iwf@iwf.org
Website: www.iwf.org

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*"You Tarzan? Me Jane's attorney."*



*Cover by Joe Morse. Cartoon (above) by Charles Jaffé*



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# Why a Good Man Is Hard to Find

Feminism liberated men too, observes *Harvey Mansfield*

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In our new world of choice Dad seems to have gone, departed, left the scene, flown the coop. Many dads are literally gone, and they make up the statistics of male abandonment, the dead-beat dads whom we denounce. Other dads are physically present but are no longer really dads. They have lost their authority as dads and become something much smaller, feebler, and ridiculous. Sensitive males, they are: new-age guys.

I exaggerate, if you look around at the many functional dads who still do what dads used to do. But I do not exaggerate if you consider the trend of things and the dominant ideas in our time, particularly the idea of choice.

What is the new world of choice? It is something more general than the pro-choice position in the abortion debate, though it does have to do with women because it arises from the movement of women's liberation that began in the 1960s and 1970s. It is women who have deprived themselves of dads. Or, better to say, feminist women have done this.

The women's movement wanted above all to liberate women from any definition of woman. All previous definitions had left women dependent on men, suffering under them and behind them as the second sex (the title of Simone de Beauvoir's famous book). The feminists did not propose a new definition of women, one that would put women over men and thus reverse the injustice of millennia and repay men for always having oppressed them. Perhaps they could not think of a new definition powerful enough to overturn male oppression; perhaps there was none to be conceived. Instead, they rebelled against definitions as such, not only definitions of woman, and adopted a theory (derived from Nietzsche, one of the most egregious male chauvinists who ever lived) which says that a woman can construct her own identity. Under that theory she can and must choose, and she chooses not only the life that suits her self but also her very self.

Here is radical freedom for women. They get to choose the principles guiding their lives as well as the lives themselves. They not only cannot be ruled by anyone else—by men, that is —but they also cannot even be judged from the outside. With so extreme a conception you cannot speak of what is in a woman's interest because that implies woman is a definite being. To do so implies that woman has an essence, and the feminist theorists denounce nothing so shrilly as "essentialism."

In this situation it becomes difficult to make a choice because when you do so, having chosen, you reduce the range of choices previously open to you. If choice is what you want, it is paradoxically better not to choose, so as to keep your options open. If someone does choose to do something important, like get married, people today tend to call that choice a commitment.

A commitment is a step taken in a certain direction that need not have been taken, that could have gone either way. It is not following your duty, nor pursuing an end, nor even taking pleasure in satisfying an inclination. It is quite arbitrary: You just decided. Consequently it remains a question whether you will decide to honor your commitment. To do so would be consistent with your self as you have made it, but we know also that the self is a bundle of inconsistencies. If it weren't, it might be as fixed as an essence—and we must never have an essence.

The exhalations from this expanded notion of choice make up our moral climate today, except in the most conservative religious (or military) settings. My statement may once again seem extreme, but that is because it is intended to describe the logic of choice and the idea of radical autonomy it supports. The idea is not confined to feminists. It has spread to pop psychology and it infects the fancy ethical theories devised by professors. Its influence is seen in all the attention paid to one's precious identity, and in the simple fact that young people these days are waiting until well into their thirties before making a "commitment" to marriage.

The consequence of putting choice foremost is that no woman has to put up with anything she doesn't like. In particular, her autonomy protects her from the unreasonable demands of her husband; she does not have to tolerate his bad habits or even his foibles. When everything you encounter in your life may be judged by the standard of whether you would choose it, the chooser becomes more choosy.

Now, what about men? How will they react to the world of choice? It is amazing, but I think true, that feminists have not seriously put this question to themselves. They seem to have been confident that men would adjust to an equal and independent status for women without too much difficulty. They believed their own rhetoric when they said that alleged sexual differences were nothing but stereotypes, as if stereotypes were easy to erase. But most of all they relied on sensitivity. This was their implicit answer to the question they did not face squarely.

Instead of lording it over women, men would be sensitive to them. Male sensitivity would replace male authority, and a good thing too. Sensitivity as



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opposed to authority is unselfish. The man in authority pretends to be acting for your good, but in fact he is pleasing himself. If only he can be made sensitive to women in the same way that women are sensitive to men—observing what they do, anticipating their likes and dislikes, sympathizing with their troubles—then the problem will be solved. Reversing the words of Professor Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady*, the feminists asked, "Why can't a man be more like a woman?" Like Higgins, they found no answer.

The feminists have successfully put across their idea that men and women are exchangeable. They did this not with public protest in the streets (like the suffragettes), but by the quieter, more feminine method of "raising consciousness," which teaches men equality by embarrassing them. The result has been triumph of a sort:

Many or most American men are now embarrassed for having denied women their equal rights. Men's sensitivity both reveals and conceals their embarrassment. They feel obliged to make amends and at the same time to show they mean to avoid such behavior in the future.

Or is there something more sinister lurking in the soul of the sensitive male—the thought, perhaps, that the new dispensation might be convenient for him too? It should have been suspicious to feminists that they gained their point so easily. Long-established prejudices, however unjust, do not fade away as quickly and painlessly as male chauvinism seems to have done.

President Clinton shows the situation clearly. One could not find a man more favorable to feminists and more sensitive, as we say, to their issues. But his issue-sensitivity is combined with personal insensitivity that reminds one of the old Adam—and the old chauvinist. Not only was he reckless with the happiness of his family, and with the example he sets for the country—these are traditional male failings—but he also treated a woman as an inferior sex object. That is no peccadillo; in the new feminist canon law it is mortal sin. That the acts were consensual makes them still worse, for it means that the President corrupted a woman's soul to get her to consent, which feminists would say she could never do on her own. The President illustrates both the sensitive male and the reprobate male's reaction thereto.

Of course feminism did not create male irresponsibility, and it is not the only cause that Dad is so often no longer around. But it gave him a license to take off. Women's liberation is liberation for men too, and not of the best in men. The feminists should have known that a tendency to promiscuity is in the nature of a male. You can call that tendency a "stereotype" and suppose that it need not be. But what if you are wrong? You are taking a big risk with the happiness of women who do not want to be deserted.

And the feminists should also have known that democracy by itself is hostile to paternal authority, as it tends to make women equal to men and children equal to parents. That was written by Tocqueville in 1840—so no excuse for ignorance! Democracy needs to find a way to keep Dad at home instead of leaving his equal wife to fend for herself and take care of the children. Somehow men, for all their faults, are still handy to have around. A deep voice, a manly calm, an occasional frown can have an effect that no amount of help with the housework can achieve.

Male responsibility needs to be built on the strength of men as men. It needs to transform the typical male vice of wandering (not always a vice, by the way) into the deliberate virtue of staying home. But the power of that virtue needs to use the energy of the vice by appealing directly and without apology to a man as a man. The sensitive male is a pathetic weakling because his sensitivity is at odds with his maleness. He is not allowed to be a man in any responsible way, and so he shows his dignity, in the world of choice, by suiting himself. Until quite recently women were taught this obvious truth. Now, thanks to feminism, they have to learn it for themselves. ◆

*Harvey Mansfield is a professor of government at Harvard University.*



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# The Perfect Man

## *Jo Anne Randall* dreams of her handyman

No one in the family remembers exactly how Ernest Otis came into our lives. My husband Robert thinks that Mr. Otis was part of the crew we hired to help complete the work after we tore down the kitchen wall.

Open laths with bits of plaster still clinging to them stared at us reproachfully, even after a year. The two-by-tens remained bare, fresh wounds with the daunting responsibility of supporting the new kitchen ceiling. "You can't make me into a dry-waller!" Robert shouted one day in exasperation. We hired a crew, which arrived the following week. Robert insists that Mr. Otis was among them.

Ernest Otis was an older man, verging on elderly. He had a pot belly and very few teeth in his mouth. His gappy grin left the impression of a slightly lopsided jack-o'-lantern. His upper arms, however, would have been the envy of any major-league ballplayer. And his quiet self-assurance around tools, materials, fixtures, and appliances lent an air of tranquility to the entire household.

There was nothing Mr. Otis could not do. He soon replaced a whole string of specialists upon whom we had called for a dozen years: Tom Tuttle, the greasy-haired young plumber who always arrived in a late-model pickup truck with his girlfriend Tiffany beside him, practically plastered to Tom's sinewy body; Utah Hutson, the blonde and blue-eyed electrician, who was in some way kin to Tom, and who relocated to Houston during the oil boom; and a host of ill-kempt and wild-eyed roofers who never did put a stop to the endless leaks in the roof atop the fully-enclosed space that was once a back porch. Mr. Otis did everything. And once it was done, it never needed to be re-done.

Mr. Otis had good days and bad days, just like anyone else. Luck was a major factor in his life, for Mr. Otis was a gambler. Whiskey, he insisted, he could take or leave. Ditto women. But the first time he witnessed a crap game his heart pounded in his chest. The rolling of the dice took his breath away.

His passion, however, was the ponies. Sometimes, sheepishly, he asked if we could give him a portion of what we owed him in cash rather than a check. The check he would turn over dutifully to his wife. The cash he would just as dutifully turn over at the track. He often had a "tip," he'd say, and would volunteer to lay down a couple of bucks for us. Then he'd appear next day, ready for work, embarrassed at his still-empty pockets.

He had a large family, numerous children and grandchildren, and a random group of younger brothers who sometimes showed up for work with him and helped with the heavy stuff, like the tearing down of an outside wall in order to put on an addition. But the detail work he always did himself—carpentry, plumbing, wiring—alone and expertly. He never read directions or instructions. His general method of operation was to open the box, scatter the parts on the floor, toss the paper instructions aside, and get to work. He sized up assembly the way I assume Daniel Boone sized up the wilderness: by looking. It was only when this method failed him—which was rare—that he would ask me to read the instructions to him, muttering something about reading glasses. As I look back on it, I wonder if, with or without glasses, he could read at all.

We developed an almost familial affection for Ernest Otis over the years. Taciturn but kindly, always willing to help, and savvy in ways that amaze the academically-inclined. Despite his outlandish appearance and outsized belly, which was rarely completely covered by his tattered T-shirt, he is the man I would most like with me if I were stranded on a desert island.

Occasionally he could be cavalier; so confident was he in his abilities that he got himself into trouble. One day he tackled a particularly complex wiring job without removing the fuses.

"Mr. Otis," I admonished. "You have to be more careful. Electricity is complicated and dangerous."

Mr. Otis looked at me politely, torquing his neck in that way he had. If he had been wearing a cap, I'm sure he would have doffed it.

"Mrs. Randall," he told me quietly, offering the aphorism that to this day is a motto for our family: "Electricity is easy. *Plumbing* is hard." ◆

*Jo Anne Randall is a writer and psychologist in Cleveland, Ohio.*



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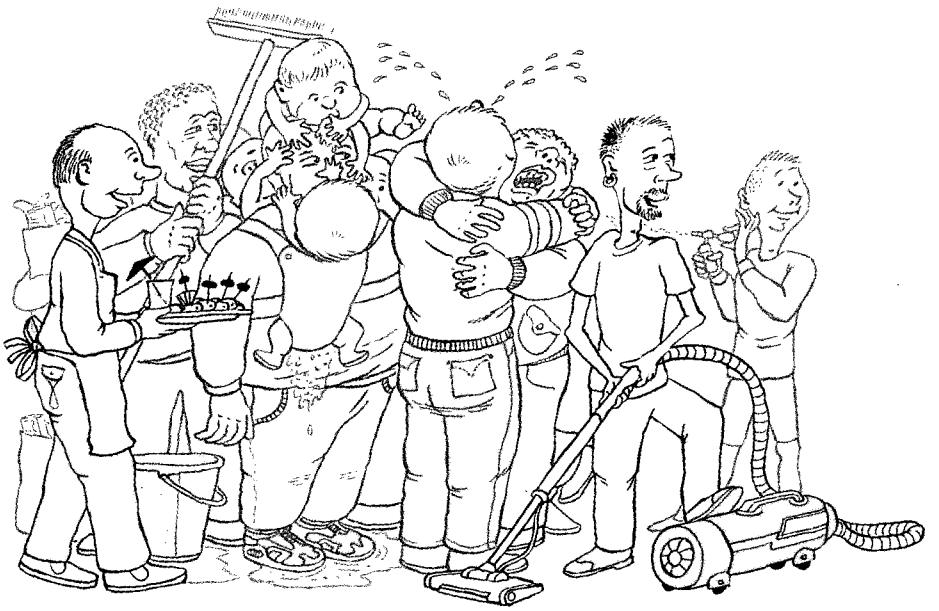

# Real Men Are Drinkin', Cussin', Leerin', Insensitive Brutes

## That's what's good about them, insists *Dave Shiflett*

There comes a time in the life of every real man—I speak of the type who drinks beer, lingers over the lingerie ads, and covets not a pat on the head by the likes of Anna J. Quindlen—when he recognizes that his species, properly understood, is all but whipped. This has nothing to do with the President's troubles. Though Bill Clinton perhaps fashions himself a "real" man, his affairs are not the stuff of wine, roses, and the boudoir, but more of the type encountered in the public restroom at the Trailways Bus Terminal. Low-rent material.

No, I'm talking about fairly normal guys. The fact that normal guys aren't what they used to be struck me square between the eyes last year at the huge football complex in Irving, Texas. I wasn't attending a Cowboys game, sad to say, but covering a gathering of the Promise Keepers. Understand, Promise Keepers is a very useful organization. The United States can always benefit from a little more family stability, and not only in the ghetto and trailer park. Besides that, if these fellows follow the advice of PK operatives and stick closer to home, there will be less congestion at the trout streams and golf courses.

Yet there was also something deeply unnerving about the meeting, which was attended by around 42,000 male carnivores of ordinary appearance. The problem: not only were these fellows constantly scorned for slacking off, drinking beer, and lingering over the lingerie ads, but they clearly appreciated the dressing down. In one instance, a speaker proclaimed that as soon as a man gets home from his first job, he should immediately begin a second set of duties: cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, even changing diapers. "You should be the first up in the morning, and the last to bed at night," this speaker said.

An unnerving message, at least for those partial to the Old Testament blueprint for the division of labor, but to my lone horror there arose a deafening roar of approval. One would have thought the Rockettes had taken the stage, accompanied by the distribution of free Budweiser. In the terrifying din, two words came to mind: Stockholm Syndrome. These fellows had clearly succumbed to the condition in which captives show sympathy with their *continued on page 29*



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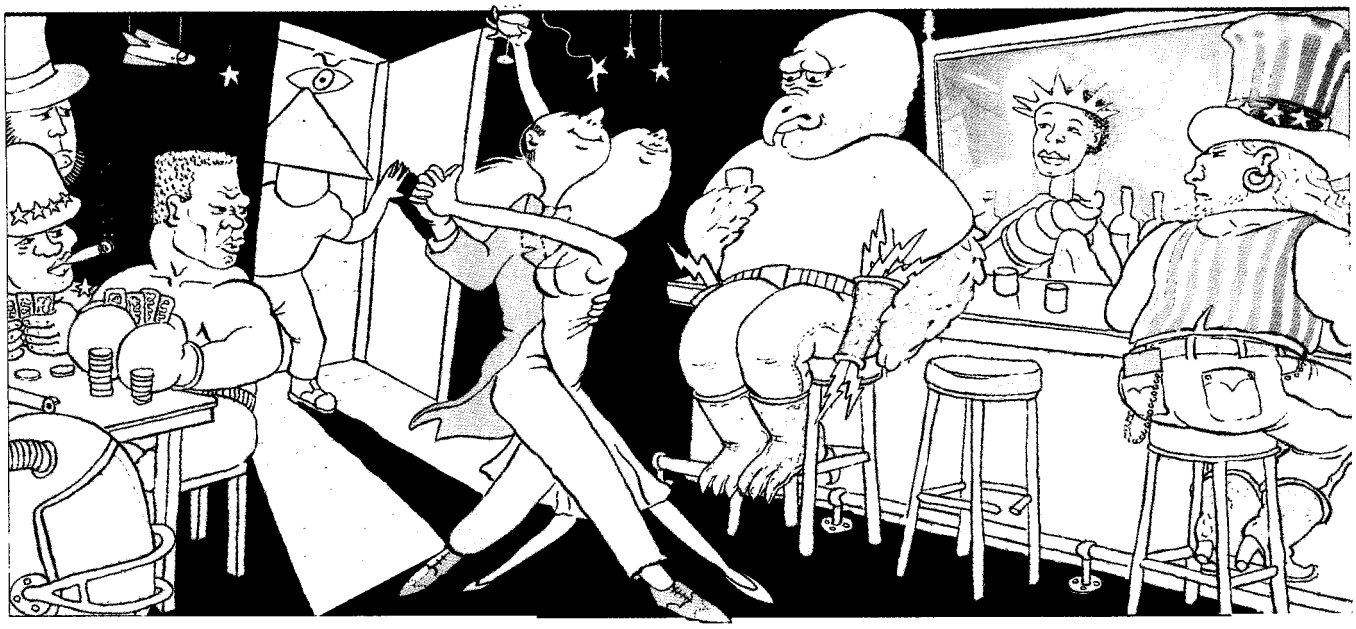

# ...But They Should Know How to Dance

## *Fareed Zakaria* on the lost art of being a gentleman

Of course, I can't dance. Oh, I plant myself on the dance floor at a wedding, two glasses of champagne to the wind, and sway back and forth to the beat—sort of. But I can't do the foxtrot or waltz or swing or tango. I wish I could. I often watch movies from the 1930s and '40s and admire the physical grace, not to mention charm and wit, of the men in them. (I also wish I could casually polish off as many martinis as William Powell in *The Thin Man,* but that's another matter.) Now admittedly most men were never like that, but that was the ideal. That's why movies had heroes like Clark Gable and Cary Grant. Even action movies like *Gunga Din* were full of elegance and savoir faire.

Today's heroes have somewhat different qualities. Consider Bruce Willis. Most Bruce Willis movies take a normal bourgeois type and quickly turn him into a macho, beer-swilling, mud-splattered, gun-toting, cussing freak. Every time he lets out another gross obscenity, men smile appreciatively and women swoon. Off-stage, things get worse. Leonardo DiCaprio goes to New York's most glamorous nightclubs dressed in something vaguely resembling underwear and women do more than swoon. Crude behavior is not just heroic, but also witty—as Eddie Murphy or the makers of *Something About Mary* well know. Fart and the world laughs with you, attempt repartee and you do it alone.

Much of the problem lies in the American fascination with authenticity and dislike of artifice. Real men, legend has it, roamed the Wild West killing Indians, corralling cattle, and drinking whisky straight from a bottle. They had no time for such niceties as fine clothes, art, music, and tableware. Manners were for sissies. And while the West has been tamed, cattle squat meekly in mass-production farms, and real men work in air-conditioned offices on Wall Street, somehow the ideal lives on. In today's yuppified world of organic alfalfa, single-malt scotch, and designer sneakers, the worst epithet one can level at anyone or anything is "pretentious." Even in as fussy a field as wine, writers fall over themselves to detect and denounce any incipient snobbery. You can be rude, crude, and vulgar, but thank God you're not a snob!

To be fair, *continued on page 30*



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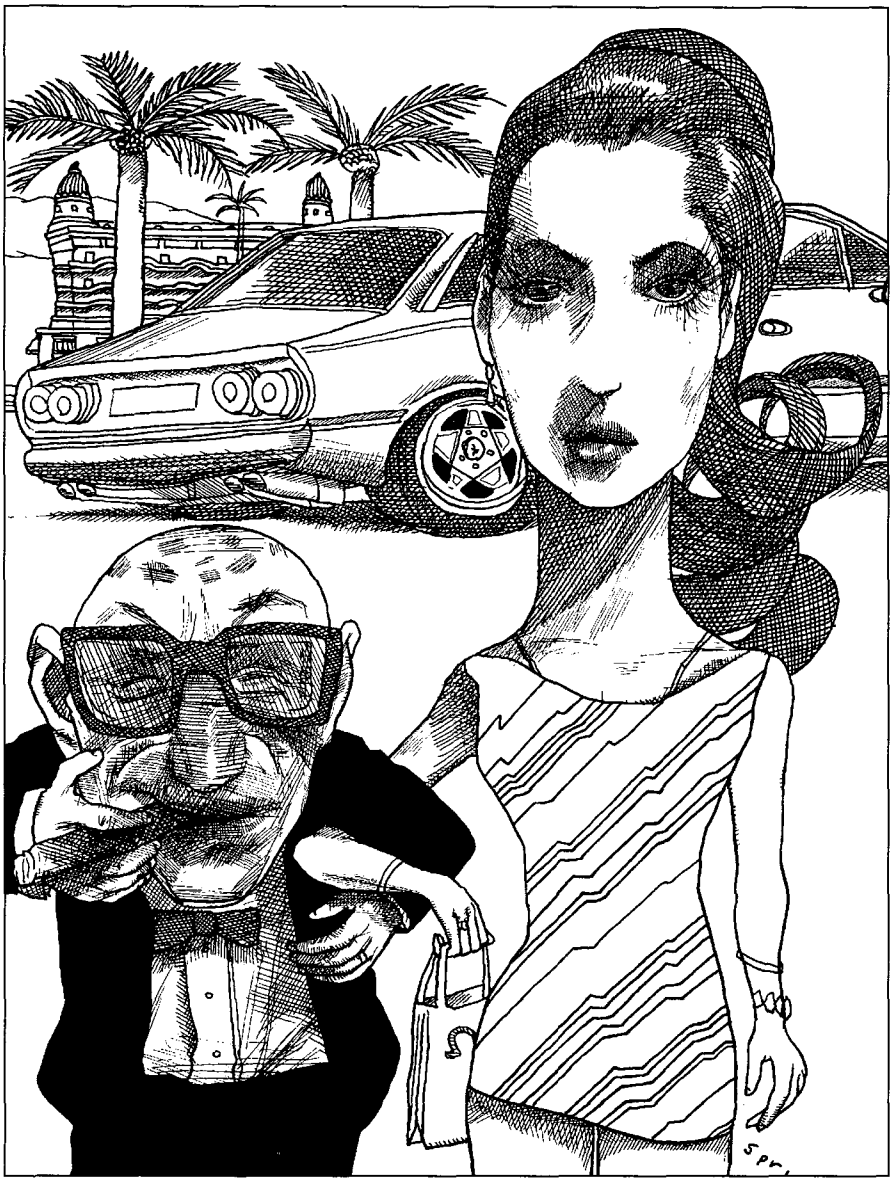
# He's Tall When He Stands on His Money

## *Jennifer Grossman* on dating rich men



ACTUALLY, MONEY CAN buy you love—or at least a very reasonable facsimile. This suspicion was confirmed for me a few years ago as I observed the dynamics at a dinner party, held in Palm Beach at the San Simeon-like citadel of an extremely successful, single financier. A young lady friend of his had invited the guests—each woman lovelier than the next. Expensive red wine breathed in crystal decanters. As the host poured a glass, he remarked to the assembled, hopeful gazes: "I really admire a woman who knows her red wine."

There was a beat before one actress cleared her throat. "Did you say this red came from Côte de Beaune?" Another wrested the lure, "Nineteen eighty-five was such a good year for Burgundy." Yet another began to tell the story of how her father took her to vineyards as a child. I felt the perverse impulse to ask the butler for a beer. But I restrained myself. Not just because I hate beer, nor because I thought such sarcasm might be a bad career move (my host was also an important speechwriting client), but because I felt like a tourist on safari, afraid that any rude noise on my part might upset the fascinating ritual that was unfolding before me.

And besides, what would I have been protesting—that men of wealth move the world and with it the hearts of women? No, to me the real spectacle is those women who claim that their affections are immune to the lure of lucre. These women fall into four categories.

The first is the sour-grapes category. These women recognize that by dint of their dullness and poverty of charm they have little chance of attracting a rich and powerful suitor. But, they insist, they never wanted to in the first place—so there! The second category is made up of metaphysical myopics. These are individuals whose sense of life has been corrupted by egalitarianism. From their sum-zero perspective, if a man is rich he must be unhappy, if a woman is beautiful she must be stupid; otherwise, in their whining worldview, it just wouldn't be fair. The third category contains the spiritualists who pity the rich man as hostage of Mammon, and the ideologues who hate the rich man as hero of capitalism.

Apart from these stand the fourth, and most honest, category of women who claim cash leaves them cold: the empiricists. These are the women who



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have been there, done that—who have inherited enough wealth from their ex-husbands to have arrived at true indifference, or who have inherited enough psychic scars from the same to have arrived at true aversion.

Yes, aversion. Because the same snake-charmer's song that bends and warps women's behavior—consciously or unconsciously, admitted or denied—bends and warps the reality that wealthy men perceive, too. There is a parallel in economist Thomas Sowell's explanation of the fall of civilizations: "The great catastrophes of history have usually involved much more than [human error]," he argues. "Typically, there has been an additional and crucial ingredient—some method by which feedback from reality has been prevented, so that a dangerous course of action could be blindly continued to a fatal conclusion." Similarly, the rich and powerful man is subtly sabotaged by those who seek to benefit from his riches and bask in his power, and so flatter his conceits and shelter his insecurities—filtering out the discordant feedback human beings need to evolve. Or to paraphrase a Yiddish proverb: With money in your pocket you are wise, you are handsome, and you sing well, too.

Imagine: If you lived in a world in which everyone always laughed at your jokes, you would conclude you were very funny. If you lived in a world in which people competed to compliment your intelligence and discernment, you would conclude you were something of a visionary. And if you lived in a world where no one objected to your casual cruelties, you would conclude that you were a prince of a man. Or better yet, a king.

A female friend of mine described the Rex Complex for me this way: "Different people have different kinds of entitlement mentalities—a sense of having the right to something they have not earned. For one person it may be a government handout, for another it may be professional respect. For wealthy men it is the love of beautiful women." And she should know. One of the most exquisitely beautiful creatures I have ever met, she is a walking affront to the champions of equally meted out mediocrity, who despise her not for her faults or weaknesses, but for her glories: her wit, her style, her strength—and the fact that these virtues have won her the love of one of New York's most successful and admired multi-millionaires.

Despite this long-term and well-known relationship, a Las Vegas billionaire made an aggressive bid to make her his mistress, showering her with gifts and offering to whisk her away to Egypt aboard his 727, the largest of his fleet of private jets. When she pointed out that he was married, and that further she was seeing someone—who also happened to be his friend—the reply came: "Yes, but he's a duke. And I'm a king." If that were not enough to drive the megalomaniac message home, he even suggested a code name she should use for the affair: "When you call, just ask for 'Rex.'"

The relative frequency of these experiences—Donald Trump and Ron Perelman were the latest aspirants—has enabled my friend to learn from them and laugh at them. Reflexively generous, she is as quick to offer me the Gucci shirt off her back as she is to offer to set me up with the Gucci-loafered geek she wants to get off her back. But I notice that even she feels constrained to communicate in euphemisms—"He's such a good catch"; "He's so smart"; "He's really interesting"—when we both know implicitly that what she really means is: "Honey, he's loaded." Yet there's more honesty in her wink-and-nod than in the dozens of other women I know, who high-mindedly insist they're not interested in dating wealthy men, and then off-handedly ask whether a certain New York tycoon is "still dating that model," contempt dripping from their mouths like the saliva of vultures circling the plain in hopes of feeding off another creature's kill. "What does he see in her?" these women want to know.

What he sees and other rich men see would be manifestly obvious to these hypocrites were not their vision so corrupted with envy. And the women who revel without apology in the attention of wealthy men see, too. They see, of course, the obvious—the Gulfstream jets, the private Caribbean islands, the latest baubles from Bulgari. They see the fear and fawning adulation their rich Romeos inspire in other individuals. And they see the sometimes hideous moral disfigurement that year upon year of marinating in such sycophancy can produce. They also see something else. They see beyond the boorishness encouraged by flattery, beyond the flattery inspired by wealth—to see what created the wealth in the first place: genius, vision, daring, and an indomitable spirit. As Hank Rearden, the wealthy industrialist of *Atlas Shrugged,* said to his mistress: "Dagny, whatever else we are, it's we who move the world and it's we who will pull it through."

What woman would not want to be moved by the men who move the world? ◆

*Jennifer Grossman is a writer living in the Berkshires.*



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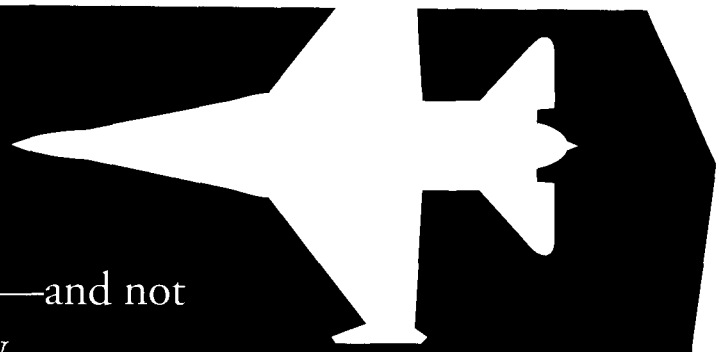
# My Sex, Right or Wrong



*James Bowman* explains why men—and not women—will die for their country

When I was a boy my father, a veteran of the Philippines campaign during the winter and spring of 1945, told me this story: Once when his unit was pinned down by Japanese fire from, seemingly, all directions at once, a man cracked and went running toward what he imagined was the enemy with his hands in the air screaming, "Don't shoot!" My father, then a not-quite-nineteen-year-old corporal and the senior non-commissioned officer in that particular foxhole, was ordered to shoot the man dead—and did so, he said, without hesitation. My father and everyone who saw what he did instinctively understood that the first hint of cowardice under fire had to be ruthlessly and instantly suppressed, lest panic begin to spread and the morale of the whole unit, the whole army, collapse.

Defenders of the "macho man" from the encroachments of a unisex armed forces do not often mention the fragility of unit cohesion which alone enables an army to stand up under deadly fire, but they might do better to stress its weakness than its strength. Like the male ego of which it is a kind of collective extension, it is full of bluster and swagger and mere vanity—who looks more ridiculous, after all, than someone who is shot in the back by his own side?—but it is also as easily bruised, even shattered. Close to the surface of the toughest male exterior lies the sniveling inner "Promise Keeper," eager to be told that he should give free rein to his feelings of vulnerability.

Of course the fact that it is women who have historically been responsible for inveigling men out of their macho carapace and into acknowledgment of their deeper feelings should have no bearing on the question of women in combat. Doubtless women can learn to be as good at suppressing feeling as men can. Or almost as good. But I wonder if they can ever be persuaded, as all soldiers must be, of the reality of this masculine vanity? Women are simply incapable of being deceived by what a man in battle must be deceived by, which is the mask of masculine imperviousness to feeling.

Part of the reason why Steven Spielberg's hit film, *Saving Private Ryan*, did so well last summer, according to many of those who commented on it, was that it looked so "real." Up close to Spielberg's soldiers in the landing craft on D-Day, we could see the rain of bullets and the mist of blood and viscera; we could see the terror of the men and the horror of war as they have seldom been shown before. We could see heads being blown off. But on what basis did a popular audience —the overwhelming majority of which had never seen a shot fired in anger, except of course in the movies and on TV—decide that this horror was somehow a mark of authenticity?

No one can know for sure, of course, but a good guess might be that in our therapeutic culture there is a lot of moral pressure to sympathize with the mentality of the victim; and the victim always believes that the worse the horror the more "real" it is, since he owes his status as victim to such a perception. Ever since Freud called the id "true psychic reality," ever since the First World War gave us our first élite class of military victims (the famous "lost generation"), ever since T.S. Eliot wrote so memorably that "humankind cannot bear very much reality," our cultural predisposition has been toward believing that when we see heads being blown off we are glimpsing something "real."

It is not my purpose here to dispute the truth of this presumption. Spielberg's movie looked pretty real to me too. I only bring it up because it is important to recognize that this is not the only way to look at "reality." For most of human history, in fact, the superior reality of war has been the honor and glory that seem to most of us among the contemporary cultural élite nothing but the effluvia of its noisome propaganda—"the old lie," as the First World War poet Wilfred Owen put it, "that *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*" One might answer, mildly, that if a



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belief in the honor of dying for one's country was a lie, it was a very old lie indeed—and a lie, moreover, which was believed by so many for so long that it might as well have been true. So long as a country honored its dead, it would continue to be some kind of an honor to die for it.

True, warfare in the twentieth century has been unprecedentedly horrible; true again that in all the generations that so resolutely chose to focus on the honor rather than the horror of war, there were some who, like Falstaff, considered honor to be but "a word." But it seems to me undeniable that our culture has undergone a Copernican revolution in the last seventy or eighty years whose consequences for our survival as a culture are as yet unknown. One of those consequences, surely, is the increased difficulty simply in understanding war. If it is all so horrible, why do we continue to engage in it? Recent thinking, whether it is economic, political, philosophical, sociological, or anthropological, has tended to concentrate on the instrumentalities of war. Even Spielberg, helpless in the face of the images of horror he has re-created for us, mars his otherwise excellent film with two or three inept attempts to explain them.

Of course, war can be and always is explained in terms of "right" or "justice"—or, for the more cynical, of the economic advantage and political hegemony which are supposed to be the victors' portion. But these explanations, even if he believes in them, seem rather inadequate to account for the courage of the individual soldier on which all warfare depends. One may be quite an optimist about human nature, and still harbor a very considerable doubt about whether ordinary infantrymen, most recruited from the lower socio-economic strata of any society, care enough about their country's relative economic advantage—let alone some abstract idea of justice—to give their lives for it.

Yet the alternative, that young men simply like ganging together to kill each other, seems unthinkable—an insult to everything we most devoutly believe about social and moral order. That alternative is an affront to the therapeutic mentality which must, with considerable irony, adopt a position of "denial" towards all kinds of manifestations of young male violence, insisting that they are a species of pathology rather than the norm that history would suggest. And there is another, perhaps even more important, obstacle to our allowing ourselves to think such a thought, which is that it leaves out the girls, who are unaccountably lacking in enthusiasm for killing and maiming each other.

I do not wish to mystify. Mystification is too often the result when the burden of justifying the way things are is placed, as it generally is, on defenders of the status quo. This is true even when, perhaps especially when, the way things are is also the way things have always been. Perhaps there are not many things that have always been the way they are, but one of them is certainly that men fight and kill each other in periodic bouts of more or less ritualized slaughter and women do not. Legends of Amazon warrior-women and tales of the occasional "transgendered" (as we have been taught to call her) female soldier like Molly Pitcher notwithstanding, this is just about as constant a fact of human history as the incest taboo.

Why is this? Tradition? A mystification. Religion? A mystification. These arguments too easily become tautologies: We do things this way because this is the way we do things. Arguing that women are naturally weaker or less ferocious than men is no argument against admitting individual women who are physically strong and eager to kill. Evolutionary biology, it's true, might give us pause. Because, biologically speaking, female eggs are a scarcer resource than male sperm, they must be more carefully husbanded and guarded if a society is to survive. Exposing a society's women to combat,

*Drawing by Yuri Kolyadenko*



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as the Russians did to theirs in the Second World War, is like eating its seed corn—an act of desperation that must be retrospectively justified by seizing someone else's women (or seed corn) to make up the loss. As in the Russian case, it simply becomes a measure of the savagery with which a war is being fought.

But even this argument begins to sound like a kind of mystification these days, since the survival of a particular human society seems rather remote from the experience of modern, "police-action" warfare. And why should one society be "privileged" over another anyway? Yet among those who have actually fought in war and know what the experience of combat is like, there is commonly an almost visceral reaction against the idea of fighting alongside women. More important, the macho culture, so much deplored by feminists and others who would break down the barriers to women in combat, undeniably produces a fear of looking girlish that does have its military uses. As a former Marine officer told Thomas E. Ricks of the *Wall Street Journal,* "You can call it macho B.S., but until someone comes up with a better way of getting terrified 18-year-olds to stand up in front of machine guns and take the hill, I'm sticking with it."

What woman would die sooner than admit to being man-like in her feelings and behavior? In this sense, women are the rational sex—even to the point of looking for reasons when there are none. Pacifism is reasonable. All wars *are* absurd and unjust, as the pacifist insists: politically foolish in the ultimate consideration, since it is approximately true, at least in modern warfare, that there are no victors in war, only more and less damaged contestants. But what will never make sense to a woman (or the woman-like pacifist) is that it could be no less one's duty to offer oneself up to death for an absurdity than it would be to do so for justice or utopia or any of the rationalizations that are offered for wars.

Indeed, for the male sense of honor, it is actually better to fight only for duty and the glory of fighting and not for chimeras like justice or utopia. Absurdity, by contrast, is a steadfast rock of certainty, and the more absurd the sacrifice, the more (*not* the less, as we 1960s rationalists mistakenly thought) honorable it is. Only those designed by biology to glory in fighting for the sake of fighting can understand the peculiar logic (and we have to make a distinct effort these days) of Stephen Decatur's toast, "My country, right or wrong." But that is the attitude that wins wars. Perhaps we don't want to win wars on such terms. Perhaps losing them is to be preferred on moral and equitable grounds to preservation of such irrational and unnecessary vestiges of outmoded ideas of honor. But at least we ought to recognize that that is the choice that we as a society are making. ◆

*James Bowman is the American editor of the* Times Literary Supplement *of London.*

# The ABCs of Manhood

## *John Muggeridge* defends boys' schools

The avenging beam of Mr. Ince's flashlight moves from one guilty bed to the next.

"All those who were talking report to my study."

It is 1942. Our school has evacuated us to a stately home in England's West Country. Six nine-year-old boys put on slippers and dressing gowns and follow our prep-school Himmler to the place of execution. An hour later they return, their bottoms stinging but their hearts at peace. My own bottom is at peace, but my heart is stinging. By not owning up, I have shown cowardice in the face of the enemy, and, once those battle-scarred heroes have enough daylight to start comparing welts by, nothing short of a direct attack by the Luftwaffe can prevent my disgrace from becoming public knowledge. But day hasn't broken. Mr. Ince's gym shoe may yet stave off humiliation. I knock on his door.

"Please sir, I was talking."

Mr. Ince greets my confession of guilt with stony silence. No amount of pleading on my part can persuade him to beat me. You should have paraded with the others, he growls; it's too late now; get out.

Back in bed, I listen for the wail of sirens and the crack of anti-aircraft fire. Not that I'm likely to hear them. The big raid of Exeter, a city within six miles of the place where we have taken refuge from enemy bombing, happened three weeks ago, and no one expects Goring to hit the same bricks and mortar twice in a row. Soon the first birds are twittering, and a hushed voice from across the dormitory aisle



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asks, "How many did you get, Mugs?" My day of shame has begun.

This was just the start of my Ince troubles. To dictators, every sign of disorder feels like a personal affront. No wonder the aura of ungovernable dishevelment which I exuded in those days so galled Mr. Ince. He was forever strangling me in fruitless attempts to put my tie the right side out, or carving angry red circles around the blots and crossings-out that marched inexorably across my written work. How much pleasanter life would have been for both of us had there been ballpoints and white-out! God must have meant us not to have them. Ink even used to get beneath my fingernails, from whence, during one pre-lunch hand inspection, Mr. Ince assigned me the impossible task of banishing with pumice stone.

Then, two years behind me, arrived my younger brother Charles, combed of hair, buttoned of fly, unrumpled of stocking. His pens never splintered; the knots he tied in Boy Scouts never slipped; the campfires he put three or fewer matches to always lighted. No one took greater delight in completion. I can see him now, swaying triumphantly across the rope bridge his team had beaten all others in setting up. The very radishes he planted seemed infected by his desire to excel, and they would appear above ground before mine did. (Charles never wearied of pursuing excellence. Shortly before his tragic death on a French ski slope in 1957, he won the Sword of Honor at Dartmouth Naval College.)

Mr. Ince welcomed him with open arms. Not that Charles was by any stretch of the imagination a toady. He smoked autumn leaves, feasted at midnight, and chuckled knowingly at misconstrued dirty jokes with the rest of us, but he never allowed such distractions to impede the exercise of his natural talent for schoolboying. Who can resist an apt pupil?

As Charles' runs, goals, and marks climbed, Mr. Ince began grooming him for a public school scholarship. (In England, so-called public schools are private secondary schools, most of whose pupils are boarders.) At the same time, he poured public scorn on my own chances for obtaining one. Mr. Ince's sarcasm I had learnt to bear. Teachers who rule with the tongue are inclined to forget that their most cutting rhetoric loses its effectiveness from too much use. But the favors Charles received were not just verbal ones. Officially recognized scholarship candidates enjoyed the privilege of listening on Saturday nights in Mr. Ince's study to *Much-Binding-in-The-Marsh,* Britain's then most popular radio comedy. And Charles wasn't even a returning prodigal; he had got the fatted calf legally. That was what rankled most.

With the end of term came a chance for revenge. Just before every holiday, Mr. Ince, who saw no incongruity in combining the roles of tyrant and progressive, used to have us make written assessments of his performance. This was to be the moment of truth. Having carefully checked my nib for hairs, and pushed up my blotting paper as close to the scene of action as possible, I wrote: "You favoritize some boys."

"I must say, Muggeridge," laughed Mr. Ince on our first day back in school. "I like your new word." It was the only compliment, albeit a backhanded one, I ever remember him paying to my writing style.

Shortly before we moved on to public schools, Mr. Ince gave us our first sex talk. Taking part in a new liturgy is always anxious-making. One has to watch others for when to kneel, stand, or sit. In our case, however, there were no others to look to. What we needed most was not sex ed., but sex-ed. ed.

Mr. Ince began on an ominous note by saying he wanted to make us feel comfortable about our sexuality. Such reassuring language from a master most often presaged punishment or prohibition. The word "sexuality" told me where the axe would most likely fall: on our favorite bedtime sport, in which a server has to lob rolled-up socks at his opponent's crotch, scoring

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one point for every wince of pain he manages to exact from him.

No, it was mental not physical discomfort Mr. Ince wanted to spare us. You must stop worrying about what is happening to your bodies, he insisted. But wait a minute—what *was* happening to our bodies? Mine seemed much the same as I remembered it, except, perhaps, a little taller. Now I began worrying about not experiencing the changes that Mr. Ince had so emphatically minimized the worrisomeness of. Could I be deformed? I decided I must be when Mr. Ince moved on to the subject of wet dreams. Why else had I not had one? Too much leaf-smoking must really have stunted my growth! But worse was to come. Mr. Ince, evidently a firm believer in the multi-disciplinary approach to English teaching, ended this most horrendous of any class I have ever had to sit through by requiring us to write an essay no less than three hundred words long describing our latest nocturnal emission.

Somehow things worked out all right in the end. I faked a wet dream by plagiarizing an episode from *No Orchids for Miss Blandish,* the latest in torrid love stories then being serialized by our favorite Sunday tabloid. Charles and I both won scholarships—to the same public school. Two years later, poetic justice was served when Kenneth Horn and Richard Murdoch, the stars of *Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh,* performed in our new school's auditorium. As for Mr. Ince, after the war he disappeared from view. I wrote to him with my newly acquired fountain pen boasting of my unforeseen success in the examination hall, and mentioning Horn and Murdoch's visit. He didn't answer me.

Did my prep-school days permanently scar me? Not that I can tell. But then maybe I'm missing something. The case against boys' boarding schools is put so powerfully these days that I sometimes wonder whether I'm not living in a socio-psychological fool's paradise. Why didn't Mr. Ince's casual cruelties turn me into a sado-masochist? And how can one challenge the British journalist A.N. Wilson for using "Gulag" in a recent column as a metaphor for boarding school? Metphors, by their very nature, presuppose unanimity. To contemporary ears, the sort of up-bringing I received fifty years ago sounds about as nastily anachronistic as fox hunting. No wonder the schools that persist in providing it have on both sides of the Atlantic become endangered species.

Yet more than just nostalgia makes me regret their disappearance. They conferred upon me a blessing, the fullness of which my grandchildren are unlikely ever to experience. Writer Shulamith Firestone claims that children today are most nearly liberated when they belong to gangs. This, as Firestone herself well knows, is nonsense. One must assume that she makes such wild assertions simply to bully us into accepting her particular anti-family brand of Marxism. On the other hand, as my own experience teaches, a year spent away from parents in the Devonshire countryside allowed us to develop the sense of independence and solidarity that Firestone could only dream of—and without recourse to murder, drugs, and mayhem.

We fought our turf wars on the rugby field—and also in the dormitory. There, Mr. Ince was the adversary we closed ranks to resist. I salute him for having helped me acquire what these days one has to brandish automatic weapons in school yards just to get the taste of: a boyhood. But circumstances were to confer an even greater blessing upon me. The fact that I could spend most of my first twenty-five years in all-male dormitories, army messes, college rooms, and boarding houses allowed me to enjoy unimpeded the pleasures of young manhood.

At the University of Toronto, athletic department regulations ensured my poor sons could not even indulge in intramural hockey without an accusing female presence on the ice and in the dressing room

There was something else which, at least in my case, helped absence make the heart grow stronger. My parents, like Mr. Ince, cut their intellectual teeth in the heyday of Bloomsbury. We rightly consider the 1960s to have been a radical decade, but read the memoirs of gilded youth in the 1920s and the Sixties look positively conventional.

When, for example, my parents decided to join forces in 1925, they regarded matrimony as a relic of bourgeois Victorianism. Hence they not only insisted on making an open marriage, but kept their vows of infidelity to each other for the next thirty years. Being away at school and later in the army made me blessedly ignorant of this fact. I didn't know until some five years ago, for example, that the kind family friend who used to dress up as Father Christmas and put presents at the end of my bed was my mother's lover, or that my brother Charles was actually my half brother.

You can't have childhood traumas retroactively. I grew up convinced that I belonged to a loving and united family. Perhaps it was such a family. At least my parents loved me enough to send me to boarding schools. ●

*John Muggeridge, son of Malcolm Muggeridge, is a retired college professor in Welland, Ontario.*



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# Boys Won't Be Boys

## Not if educators have their way, reports *Christina Hoff Sommers*

THE BRITISH WRITER Kingsley Amis is reported to have said, "If there is one word that captures everything that has gone wrong since the Second World War, it's 'workshop.'" This past July, I attended the nineteenth annual conference of the National Coalition for Sex Equity in Education (NCSEE) in Kansas City, Missouri, where dozens of workshops captured everything that's going wrong with America's schools.

NCSEE (pronounced "nice-ee") is the professional organization of some six hundred "sex-equity experts" who work in the federal government, state departments of education, local schools, and with activist organizations such as the Wellesley Center for Research on Women and the American Association of University Women. These experts' job is to formulate and implement "gender-fair" education policies and programs, and offer guidance to administrators and teachers on how to deal with sexism and sexual harassment in elementary and secondary classrooms. Schools listen to them to avoid running afoul of the often complicated requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibit sex discrimination in any educational institution that receives public funds.

The NCSEE's working definition of sexual discrimination is based on the assumption that the current education system academically shortchanges girls. Its experts believe that schools actually encourage boys to be predatory towards girls ("Schools may, in fact, be training grounds for the insidious cycle of domestic violence," according to Nan Stein, an equity specialist from the Wellesley center, who spoke at the conference), and that dismantling this system of injustice by "re-socializing" boys is a primary and urgent educational mission. "Social change is hard. Look at Seneca Falls. It's a long, long struggle," complained keynote speaker Barbara Sprung, director of Educational Equity Concepts, Inc. But she urged her listeners not to lose hope. "We have an incredible opportunity. Kids are so malleable."

Kids may indeed be malleable, but they are not in trouble for the reasons these experts think. The NCSEE's assertion that sexism is prevalent in our school system is simply not true. Girls are not faring worse than boys. Several recent university studies, as well as data from the Department of Education and independent research by Metropolitan Life Insurance in New York and the Search Institute in Minneapolis, unequivocally show that girls are academically stronger than boys. Girls get better grades, they take more rigorous academic programs, and they are more committed to school than their male peers. The math gap favoring boys is closing; the much larger reading gap favoring girls shows no signs of diminishing. The current college freshmen class is 56 percent female, 44 percent male.

Yet the facts do not seem to discourage NCSEE from its "long, long struggle" to change the nature of boys



*Drawings by Yuri Kolyadenko* 

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and to impose upon schools programs that will actively suppress and lower male academic performance even further. That's because the NCSEE philosophy deploys "equity" and "bias" in one direction only: Any advantage boys enjoy (e.g., better scores on standardized math tests, greater participation in sports) constitutes sex bias and must be aggressively combated; any advantage girls enjoy (e.g., better scores on standardized reading tests, greater college attendance) constitutes a triumph of "equity." In this vein, NCSEE has launched a massive effort to improve girls' educational performance while the far more serious educational deficits of boys go unnoticed and unaddressed.

Dr. Richard Greig, a high-school principal from York, Pennsylvania, sent me a letter describing the failure of boys at his school, but his observations could apply to schoolboys throughout the country: "Students who dominate the drop-out list, the suspension list, the failure list, and other negative indices of non-achievement in school are males by a wide ratio." According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 22 percent of boys versus 13 percent of girls, "often" or "usually" come to school without completed homework; 14 percent of males versus nine percent of females report being held back a grade; two-thirds of special education students are boys.

But while the NCSEE conference may have ignored boys' academic failings, it did not ignore the alleged menace boys pose to the safety of female students. On the first day, Jackson Katz, a self-described male feminist, led a three-hour workshop on "gender-violence prevention." He spent the first hour teaching participants how to avoid what he called the "patriarchal universe of discourse." Katz distributed a handout that included a lot of alarming (but discredited) statistics on domestic violence. When it was politely pointed out that these were factual errors, Katz and several audience members grew indignant. "This is not a discussion about statistics," cried one angry woman. The crowd was far more appreciative of a remark by another participant: "Men fear that women will laugh at them; women fear that men will kill them." At the end of his three hours, Katz told us, "I know very few healthy men."

Ironically, the Missouri conference met just a few days after the Massachusetts Board of Education reported that 59 percent of would-be teachers had failed an elementary competency test that average tenth graders would be expected to pass (writing samples included such misspellings as "improbally" and "integraty.") While the story generated hundreds of news articles and editorials on "dumbed-down teachers," none of the intense public concern penetrated the halls of the gathering.

In one workshop, Peggy Weeks, the diminutive, gray-haired director of sex equity for the Nebraska Department of Education, discussed her formulas for achieving non-sexist, bias-free schools. On a large sheet of paper with a green felt tip pen, she wrote, "Do you know why I am using a green pen? Because green is the color of hope." She then stood aside while a male colleague, Jessie Myles, wrote the following six words, vertically, on the board: Sexism, Homocentrism, Ablism, Racism, Elitism, Disablism. Myles explained that if you isolated the first letters of each of the "isms" they spelled "SHARED." "That is powerful!" Weeks gushed. (I'd previously come across Weeks' theories in an "EDEQUITY Online" discussion denying she was anti-male. "I do not hate males or boys," she posted. "I have spent my career as a woman, wife, mother, and feminist with no hesitation when it comes to calling sexism when I see it. I have seen my son caught in a society that, at its core, wants him as cannon fodder for the wars of either militarism or capitalism.")

At another workshop, Victoria Warner, an Ohio State University doctoral candidate, reported on a large-scale, seven-year equity project she and her colleagues had just completed. The purpose of the project was to develop a curriculum for high school students that would enhance their "gender-equity competencies." The results were eleven "gender-equity modules"("GEM" for short), each consisting of small packets of practice quizzes, worksheets, class activities, assessments, and "fact" sheets.

Warner had us break down into small groups to practice a sample GEM exercise called the "Bean Strategy." She distributed baggies filled with beans. Some contained two beans; others as many as ten. We were then instructed to hold a discussion, but each time we spoke we would have to give up one of our beans. Once your bag was empty, you had to remain silent. This meant some members could speak a lot more than others. (Gender-equity activists believe boys always get "more beans" than girls do.) Later we shared our feelings about what it was like to be silenced or privileged in a discussion. Both can be upsetting, we learned.

I asked Warner whether, at any time during or after the seven-year development of the GEM project, there had been any attempt to measure



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whether these activities actually improved student achievement. The good-natured Warner smiled and said disarmingly, "We have never done that. I have no idea if this stuff works."

This preference for "feel good" (or, as it may be, "feel bad") exercises over empirical research prevailed in many of the other workshops as well. NCSEE participants sat in circles, shared feelings, and performed exercises designed to improve their "sensitivity." Dr. Susan Levin Schlechter, a sex equity instructor from New York

University, suggested that teachers could "create a community of learners" by scrupulously alternating "boy/girl, boy/girl" when calling upon students. A vigilant Elaine Omann, who works in the diversity office of the Aurora Public Schools in Colorado, immediately reproached Dr. Schlechter for not saying "girl/boy girl/boy."

Sadly, these attitudes will flourish if the Department of Education continues on its current course. The department currently supports the Women's Educational Equity Act Center in Newton, Massachusetts. The WEEA center serves as a national clearinghouse and publisher of "gender-fair materials," and describes itself as the "primary vehicle" by which the federal government promotes sex equity in the schools. WEEA center representatives were very active at the Missouri conference. The center's director, Katherine Hanson, considers it her mission to inform the educational establishment about the extent of male violence in the United States. For several months, she has posted the following "facts" on the WEEA web site:

- Murders by youths have increased by 27 percent since 1980;
- Rapes increased by 59 percent between 1990 and 1991;
- Every year nearly four million women are beaten to death.

Never mind that Hanson's numbers are pure fantasy. (According to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report, murder by youths has not gone up but *down* by 20 percent since 1980. Between 1990 and 1991, rape increased four percent—but it has gone down steadily since. Furthermore, the annual number of female deaths in the entire country *from all causes combined* is approximately one million. The total number of women who were murdered in 1996, the most recent year analyzed by the reports, was 3,631.) Since the best cure for male violence, according to WEEA, is the re-socialization of little boys, Hanson suggests in her web posting that educrats branch out into the Little League.

"One of the most overlooked arenas of violence training within schools may be the environment that surrounds athletics and sports, beginning with Little League games, where parents and friends sit on the sidelines and encourage aggressive, violent behavior."

The experts at the conference agreed that a child was never too young to begin anti-harassment training. In one workshop, Merle Froschl, co-director of Educational Equity Concepts, introduced us to *Quit it!*, a curriculum for children aged five to eight distributed by the National Education Association. The authors explain the need for programs for chil-



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"Good riddance Gloria. Bye-bye Betty! There's a smart new girl on the block and she's written a sure-fire best-seller."
–Kate O'Beirne

TALK TO WOMEN under forty today and you will hear that something has gone terribly wrong with their lives. They have achieved goals previous generations could only dream of. Yet these women feel more confused and insecure than ever.

What has gone wrong? This is the big question TWQ editor Danielle Crittenden answers in her new book from Simon & Schuster, *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman.* By drawing on her own experience and the decade she has spent analyzing modern female life, Crittenden passionately and engagingly tackles the myths which keep women from realizing the happiness they deserve.

Christina Hoff Sommers praises Crittenden's book as a "scintillating guide through the mine field of sexual politics" filled with "humor and unsparing common sense." Syndicated columnist Mona Charen warns,"If wicked wit and careful reflection don't grab you, Crittenden will sweep you along with her incontrovertible logic."

You can reserve *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us* now for the special low price of $16.10 if you order it through the IWF website (iwf@iwf.org). Not only will you save on the retail price of $25 when the book is published in January, you'll be helping to support the IWF. If you don't have access to the Internet, please call our toll-free number (800) 224-6000, and we'll order it for you.

dren so young: "Gender-based teasing and bullying are pervasive in our country's public and private schools. We view teasing and bullying as precursors to adolescent sexual harassment and believe the roots of this behavior are to be found in early childhood socialization practices."

*Quit it!* includes many activities designed to render little boys less violent. Competitiveness must be curbed. As Sprung explained in her address, "Boys need to become interested in non-competitive play. What they normally do is chasing—often chasing girls." The guide suggests ways for teachers to cope with the chasing problem: "Before going outside to play, talk about how students feel when playing a game of tag. Do they like to be chased? Do they like to do the chasing? How does it feel to be tagged out? Get their ideas about other ways the game might be played. Then tell them that they are going to be playing a different kind of tag 'one where nobody is ever "out."'"

The guide recommends a new, non-violent, non-competitive version of tag called "Circle of Friends" played like this: "If a [tagged] student calls for help, two students hold hands and form a circle around her/him. This circle of friends unfreezes the student so he or she can continue playing. Students can't be tagged while making a circle."

*Quit It!* was not the only anti-harassment teachers' guide being plugged at the equity conference. Another, called *STOP IT, NOW!,* similarly warns that intervention cannot begin a moment too soon. "Teaching students about sexual harassment should begin in the first week of school, for all students, including kindergartners."

No teacher should be influenced by these equity experts—but unfortunately they will be, since NCSEE leadership drives policy in many state departments of education, teachers' unions, and schools. And the influence of these experts keeps growing, enhanced by government support.

Earlier this year, an exultant Katherine Hanson sent out the following announcement on behalf of her gender-equity group: "The WEEA Equity Resource Center is happy to announce our new [five-year] contract from the Department of Education. This contract offers us all sorts of exciting new opportunities to become a more comprehensive national resource center for gender equity...." At the conference, WEEA representatives distributed flyers asking for help in satisfying the terms of the new contract. In particular, they wanted assistance in writing an official "Report to Congress on the Status of Girls' Education in the United States," due in December.

What we need, though, is an honest reckoning with the status of boys in this country. We already know that they are at a severe disadvantage in the early grades. Making them feel bad for wanting rough-and-tumble play at recess, insisting that they play tag "where no one is out," regarding and treating them as proto-harassers, will only further aggravate their plight. Congress should refuse to accept the WEEA/NCSEE report. The five-year contract should be cancelled. No one has asked, let alone authorized, the sex-equity "workshoppers" to overhaul and reform the nation's boys. ◆

*Christina Hoff Sommers is the W.H. Brady Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. She is working on a book entitled,* The War Against Boys.



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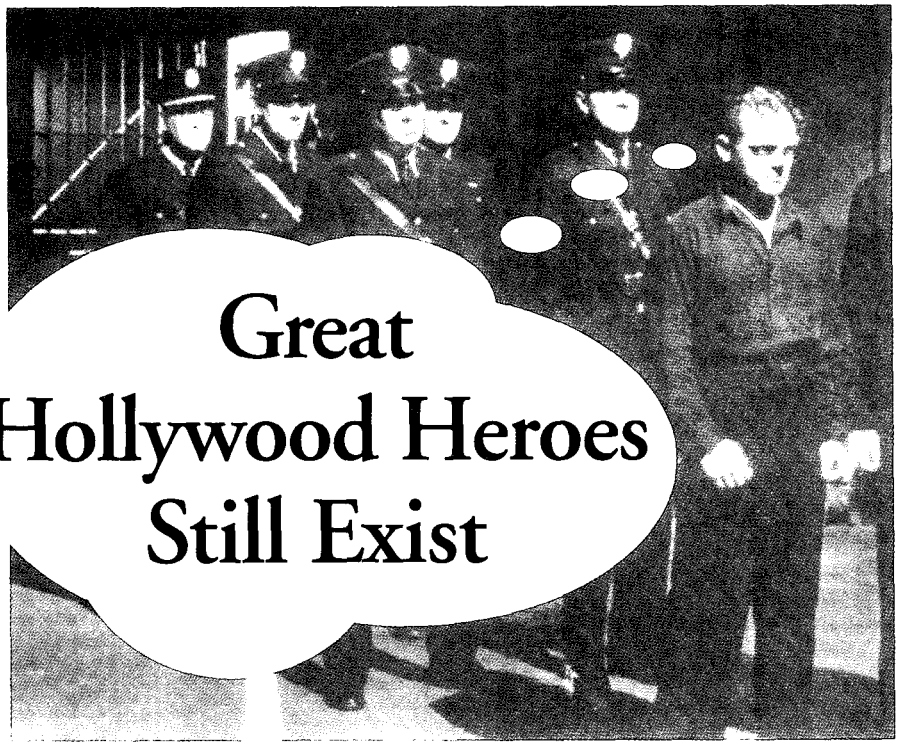

# Great Hollywood Heroes Still Exist

## They're just played by women, observes *Jonah Goldberg*

When Rodin was asked how he would sculpt an elephant, he replied that he would simply take a block of stone and remove everything that wasn't an elephant. We approach Manliness the same way, defining it by what isn't there. This can be confusing for boys, who grow up with a fear of not exemplifying manliness, yet can't say for certain what being a man is. More often, they simply understand what being a man is not—and if they forget, their error is swiftly and viciously pointed out to them by other boys. "Don't be such a chick, a fag, a crybaby, a wimp, a (fill in the blank)."

This is why movies and their heroes have always loomed so large in the imaginations of budding men. In days of yore, it wasn't just that John Wayne showed us what was manly—it was that Maureen O'Hara showed us what wasn't. It is only in the last fifteen or twenty years that punch-throwing, steely emotion, and derring-do have become co-ed activities. All of a sudden, it's not all that clear what differentiates our modern day Maureen O'Haras from our John Waynes. Indeed, really masculine actors may be at their zenith. Unfortunately, a lot of them are women.

Demi Moore shaved her head and took a beating from a drill instructor as the first female Navy SEAL in *G.I. Jane.* Sigourney Weaver, as Ripley in the sci-fi *Alien* series, broke into the "boys club" of the macho action movie. Jodie Foster, as the unflappably brave and precociously wise FBI cadet in *The Silence of the Lambs,* made great strides for women in psycho-thrillers. In 1991, *Thelma and Louise* created the genre of the outlaw-on-the-road, feminist-buddy movie. Indeed, Brad Pitt's star-making role was as Geena Davis' sexual conquest in the same film. *The Quick and the Dead* attempted to shatter the male monopoly of the Western by letting Sharon Stone crack the whip as the mysterious gunfighter. The equally bad *Bad Girls* made a similar attempt a few years earlier. Even the latest James Bond movie, *Tomorrow Never Dies*—which was hailed for restoring Bond's womanizer tendencies—offered up a female co-star who could kick Bond's ass.

Violent women in movies are nothing new. But women who are violent for manly reasons is. In this respect, the television series "Star Trek" is something of a Rosetta stone of our popular culture. In its original 1960s' run, the women were pure cheesecake. They wore short skirts, carried clipboards, and answered inter-stellar telephones. In its modern incarnation, the women are almost always more violent than the men. Or at least, the human men. Indeed, excessive male aggression is usually reserved for non-human characters so as to showcase our human foibles. There was a time in our culture when women were thought to civilize men by restraining their natural impulse to punch out the bad guys. Today women don't hold back the men—instead they're being held back themselves, shouting, "Let me at 'em!"

And it's not just that women are punching more and more; they're crying less and less. The female newscaster has become a popular film character because, I suspect, she is both hard as nails and well-manicured. In *The China Syndrome* or, more recently, *Up Close and Personal,* Jane Fonda and Michelle Pfeiffer respectively demonstrate they can hack it with the big boys when they show they won't cry in difficult situations.

On the other hand, sometimes macho women are allowed to cry, but only to demonstrate that crying should



*James Cagney on his way to the chair in* Angels With Dirty Faces 

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not be a disqualifying behavior when measuring toughness. In *Courage Under Fire*, Meg Ryan plays an Army lieutenant who, when she cries, explains that crying has nothing to do with being a brave soldier.

In fact, Hollywood's new ethos is driven by a desire to dismantle old notions of manliness.

Perhaps the best example of this phenomenon is not the masculization of women, but the masculization of gays. "Womanly" homosexual characters like those flouncing and mincing through *La Cage Aux Folles* are becoming less and less acceptable. While there has yet to be a gay *Rambo*, we are seeing more well-adjusted, strong, and handsome gay characters in movies all the time: *My Best Friend's Wedding, Single White Female, Sling Blade, As Good As It Gets, In and Out,* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* all feature gay male characters who are steady, wise, and courageous yet also—and here's the pox on John Wayne—"in touch with their feelings."

Indeed, these gays epitomize the modern ideal of manliness, or at least, the fashionable liberal vision of it, which is the convergence of male and female traits. Call this new hero Jayne Wayne: "Okay pardnuh, lock and load—the dishwasher, I mean." But in this convergence, we lose another powerful example of what we mean when we say something isn't manly. And woe to the unreformed lout who doesn't fall in line. In the television sitcom "Spin City," the charming and well-adjusted gay character tells the Archie-Bunkeresque character that it is okay for men to cry. The lout replies, "Is that what they teach you in gay college?"

While it's true that Jimmy Stewart cried in *It's a Wonderful Life*, causing controversy, his character did so because he felt that he had failed his manly obligations. He was, after all, suicidal before Clarence the Angel showed up. But it was otherwise an iron rule in movies—as in life—that a male hero didn't cry if he got hurt, didn't cry when things got tough, didn't cry when love went sour, didn't cry in the face of death, and in short, didn't think that any man should cry. When one did, like Jimmy Stewart, it was to show that even great souls are fallible; that we cannot always live up to the ideal; that we are human. But the ideal remained—and this was good. It was art.

What today's gender utopians and social engineers don't understand is that if you want to retain certain male characteristics—like bravery under fire, bravery under matrimony—you have to accept the quirks and standards of male behavior that reinforce those characteristics, like not crying at the drop of a hat. John Wayne wasn't a caricature of a tough guy. He was a tough guy.

Many of today's modern action heroes, such as they are, seem less real, more flat, more cartoonish even, than the old idealized Wayne characters. This is partly because of the diminishing influence special effects have on good acting. But it is also due to the fact that when filmmakers want to create really manly, super-heroic characters, they feel they must do so with irony. Men can't really be heroic, say the cynics. So they become parodies. When they want to have it both ways, heroic and vulnerable, it invariably falls flat. No less than Rambo cried at the end of *First Blood*. Arnold Schwarzenegger, playing perhaps the most alienated type of male possible—a mass murdering android—concludes *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* by telling a young boy, "Now I know why you cry, Johnny."

And perhaps saddest of all (but I won't shed a tear, promise) is that we aren't even prepared to grant the manly movie men of yesteryear their manliness anymore. In his book *John Wayne's America*, Garry Wills writes, to rave reviews, about the feminine, dainty, and homoerotic qualities of the Duke.

It is a confusing time to be male, but I think nature in the end will win. There have always been effeminate male leads alongside the manly ones, and boys have been able to sift out the latter from the former when seeking role models: Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, and Gene Kelly were all big draws in their day, but few kids picked teams to play *Guys and Dolls*. Kids instinctively looked to Bogart, Tracy, Wayne, Gable, and Douglas when they wanted to imitate being men. The same holds true today. Despite their weepy moments, the success of Willis, Stallone, Clooney, Costner, Schwarzennegger, Snipes, *et al.* proves that tough guys still have a few champions in Hollywood—and among their audiences. I sincerely doubt many kids left *Independence Day* imitating Harvey Fierstein or Jeff Goldblum.

And this maybe is the lesson we conservatives forget when we bemoan the loss of manliness in our culture: This too shall pass. Little boys will recoil from the crying scenes in the new action movies just as they recoiled from the kissing parts in the old ones. Feminist educators are now conceding defeat in trying to interest boys in games of house or stopping them from turning dolls into guns. Manliness remains an essential concept like Hate and Love, Kindness and Cruelty. A man is a man with or without five-o'clock shadow. John Wayne will be back sooner than we think. ◆

*Jonah Goldberg is a contributing editor to* National Review.



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# Where Have All the Fathers Gone?

## Long time passing, notes *Olivia Vlahos*

"I DON'T WANT my son to be like me," said the young woman in one of those confidences college students often share with a sympathetic teacher. "I want him to learn to be a man, a good man, a good father some day." What she meant was, "not like his father," who had abused both her and the child. This was why she had enrolled her son in Boy Scouts, hoping that the influence of other boys and men all dedicated to the selfless ideals of Scouting would help him grow into "a good man and father."

Most societies have depended, not just upon Father himself, but upon groups of males to turn boys into good men. By good men we mean good fathers, protectors of women and children, and of a way of life. Among tribal people, the entire male contingent may assume responsibility for the training process and for the great rituals which mark the transition from boy to man. Often these are staged to simulate birth. Dead to the world of women, they proclaim, the boy is reborn to his "fathers" and their world. The conviction still lingers among many people in the byways and backwaters of life that, while females are born with all the mysterious powers of life-giving, men must be made. They must be shaped for hard tasks and heavy burdens. Shaped how? By pain, by fear, by hardship. And it is the boy's own father and all the "fathers" who demand that he prove his worth.

Males take a hand in socializing the young among other primates as well. Once upon a time we thought of the male animal as little more than an enthusiastic sperm donor, cheerfully leaving to Mum the entire responsibility for bringing up baby. No longer. Dedicated observers of monkeys and apes in the wild report that infants and

*Above, a New Guinea father shelters his child from the rain*



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juveniles (particularly young males) are powerfully drawn to adult males, reflecting, so the experts believe, a need to break free of Mum and to reorient self to the group. Males are said to impart through example (and sometimes punishment) both social and motor skills, together with a sense of appropriate group behavior.

There are more surprises. Males in large bands do not simply function as a group. Individuals exhibit varying degrees of fatherly concern and affection, often to babies who are not their own. Males have been observed rescuing infants falling from cliffs or trees, and protecting them from less benign males. They are known to cuddle and groom infants, to carry them in arms or on their backs, to soothe tantrums, and to adopt infants—male or female—orphaned or abandoned by uncaring mums (which exist in the wild as they do in human society). What males can't do for baby is provide milk, and so, inevitably, the little adoptee dies and is carried, grievingly, by its male "mother" until it no longer resembles what it was.

Could the need to seek discipline and love from adult males, the need of adult males to give youngsters discipline and love, be part of the primate biogram? No one questions the existence of a "mother instinct." Is there, perhaps, a "father instinct" also? If so, that instinct is, in the human context, modified everywhere by custom and a prevailing image of what fathers are and ought to be.

Consider the image once held by Trobriand Islanders who live just off the east coast of New Guinea. In fact, there was no image at all, for Trobrianders traditionally knew nothing of biological paternity. (Certainly they did not at the time of World War I and some years thereafter when anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski lived among them.) Ancestral spirits were believed responsible for planting a child in its mother's womb. Mother's husband was expected to love and tenderly cherish whatever little ones the spirits cared to bestow. He became a sort of assistant mother whose influence, he firmly believed, would shape not only the child's personality but its looks as well. Both child and assistant mother preened when their resemblance was noted. But the person so ignorant as to point out a resemblance between a man and his sister's son (who were thought to be blood related) would find he had insulted both parties.

With sister's children, the Trobriand male was a hard, even a punishing taskmaster. It was Uncle who provisioned them, Uncle from whom they would inherit worldly goods. Uncle was the role model Mum upheld to her son. Naturally, Uncle became the nightmare figure in a boy's life. Naturally, he took all his troubles to Dear Old Dad. Thus did the Trobrianders neatly divide the two aspects of the father role—disciplinarian and best friend—between Dad and Maternal Uncle. It is a division which turns up in many parts of the world, the exact allocation of responsibility depending usually upon whether descent is reckoned through males or females.

From earliest times, however, the American dad has been expected to do it all. Never mind if the two role aspects were in conflict. Never mind the prevailing image of Dad. In Puritan colonies, each dad was head of a going family concern organized for survival. Food was produced, clothing made, the sick tended, the young trained, all in the bosom of the family. With time and a changing economy, the responsibility for making a living eventually became Dad's alone. He was also expected to be moral preceptor and overseer to his children—their teacher, their benefactor, controller, role model, caregiver, and companion. The pattern is described by historian John Demos.

Did all dads of these early times follow this pattern? Certainly not. Enough did, however, to achieve offspring distinctly American in character. Foreign visitors took notice. Alexis de Tocqueville remarked with some astonishment how different American women were from their European sisters, how they were well and fully educated, how they were told everything about the corruptions of the world, and taught to defend their virtue with



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"manly energy." For their part, American men consistently displayed "confidence in the understanding of a wife and a profound respect for her freedom." So much respect, he said, that in America even a "young, unmarried woman may [travel] alone and without fear undertake a long journey." Men and women, he observed, respected each other, made their own choices in life and, good or bad, stood by those choices. Fatherly influences at work? He thought so, but also credited the high value democracy vests in the individual.

In pre-modern days, says John Demos, it was Father who maintained a correspondence with his adolescent and adult children far from home. Father was considered the responsible party when a child turned out badly. How-to books about child rearing were invariably addressed to him. And, not surprisingly, he received custody of the children when a marriage went sour. ("Shockingly cruel" today's wisdom would insist. Maybe so. It must be admitted, though, that what is good for an individual is not always good for society. Father-custody did tend to inhibit divorce and keep families together.)

In 1810 things began to change. A Pennsylvania court ruled that, for small children, mother-care was better than father-care. Such rulings proceeded apace until, by 1847, Mum was routinely awarded custody. From this time on, writers and pundits exalted the mother's influence over a child, and children themselves referred to Mum as "my angel mother." Apart from his breadwinning function, Dad's other responsibilities were gradually diminished until he became something of a minor player in the family drama.

By the 1920s, Bronislaw Malinowsky was commenting on the perilous condition of fatherhood in England and America. Father, he said, was now "weak and henpecked," one for whom his children feel "indulgent pity rather than hatred and fear." By the 1950s, the stereotypical American household—as purveyed in many television sitcoms—included a well-meaning, permissive, somewhat bumbling dad baffled by his brighter and more manipulative wife and kids.

Then, suddenly, bumbling Dad had become a brute, a self-seeking, self-centered tyrant visiting abuse on helpless children and wife imprisoned in a punishing marriage. Divorce for women now came to be seen as something of a passage rite, necessary to the attainment of liberated selfhood. As for the children of divorce, why surely they would thrive in an environment free of strife. This was the confident view.

The social landscape underwent change as the rates of divorce rose sharply. There were more and more broken homes in which Dad was allowed to visit but not to play a significant part in his children's lives. At the same time, the rates of marriage fell. There were more and more children who had never known Dad in the home, merely a succession of males, temporary consorts for Mum.

"Why won't he commit?" This was the plaintive question young women of the 1970s began asking (and continue to ask today). "Why should he?" one is always tempted to reply. All the comforts of home are now available to him without commitment. If his girlfriend inconveniently becomes pregnant, he can recommend abortion, or he can decamp. Why should he undertake the hard tasks, shoulder the heavy responsibilities of fatherhood, when Dad is being given such a bad rap? Especially when female celebrities continually proclaim in their lives, their writings, and their pronouncements, the essential irrelevance of men. Dads, who needs them?

As it turns out, children need them. Consequences of the Daddy Dearth were, by the mid-1980s, being analyzed in books and scientific journals: rising rates of suicide and homicide among young people, along with increases of drug abuse, illegitimate births, and crime. Divorce was shown to have effects on many children far less benign and more longstanding than previously supposed. Boys were particularly hard hit. After all, they depended for a sense of self on what kind of dad was in the picture or



*Above, an American family circa 1948* 

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whether Dad was there at all.

Still other effects were noted. Although nobody disputed the fact that some single mothers reared their children very well and some married couples did not, the fact remained that most children did better in families that included fathers. Studies published in the 1990s confirm this finding. For one thing, such families are less likely to suffer poverty. Children with fathers at home are less likely to be mentally ill, to do poorly in school, or to wind up in jail. They are less prone to violence and suicide, less prone to abuse drugs and alcohol. Dad gives his daughter self-confidence and the will to reject importuning young males. Dad gives his son a model of what men are supposed to be on the job, in the home, with women, and, one day, with his own children. But where are the fathers to do these things? In shorter supply than they have ever been.

As dads have declined in numbers and prestige, so have the organizations and institutions designed to augment the paternal influence or even to function as father-surrogates. Feminism has consistently attacked the legality of all-male schools, all-male camps, all-male military units. Even the ideals and sexual exclusivity of Scouting have undergone court challenge. Although, as Christina Hoff Sommers has noted, feminists seem to view boyhood as a kind of disease, they have nevertheless demanded the right of girls to be boys. No wonder male pride in the hard tasks, the discipline, the responsibilities that would one day be Dad's alone, has diminished, along with Dad himself.

The importance of fathers and father surrogates has received only grudging acknowledgment from organized feminism. Nor have its leaders accepted any responsibility for fatherly absence. "If children need fathers so much," they seem to be saying, "let men do something about it."

And men are trying. Far more worried than feminists about the plight of America's children, many of them have organized into groups and movements such as Big Brothers, One Hundred Black Men, Wade Horn's National Fatherhood Initiative, Colin Powell's America's Promise, and David Blankenhorn's Institute for American Values. Most are designed to encourage surrogate fathering for children without dads. Two others encourage Dad himself. In October, 1995, the Million Man March drew huge numbers of African-Americans to Washington. Their demonstration was aimed not at changing government policy, but at changing men into better fathers, better husbands, more responsible human beings. So was the demonstration staged in D.C. two years later by the faith-based, multi-racial Promise Keepers.

Feminists held their peace during the Million Man March, even though it was organized and led by Louis Farrakhan, whose Islamic religion dictates for women a code of dress and conduct one would expect feminists to find intolerable. They chose instead to save their firepower for the Promise Keepers. On every talk show available at the time, feminist leaders accused Promise Keepers of having a hidden agenda. Their pious vows were just ploys to force women back into submission.

As it happens, the organization has recently suffered reversals not because of feminist opposition, but through financial difficulties. Whether or not it survives, the efforts of Promise Keepers to call dads back to their responsibilities may well have made a difference after all. Ditto the efforts of other groups with the same goals in mind. Changing population statistics will eventually tell us whether this is so, especially those charting the rates of marriage and divorce; of illiteracy and illegitimacy; of drug and alcohol abuse by teens; of sexually transmitted diseases among teens; of teen suicide, homicide, and crime in general.

But statistics tell us nothing about the image of Dad and whether that image is undergoing a makeover. For that we must turn to television. Not the the entertainment purveyed there, not to the serials, sitcoms, and dramas in which casual, recreational sex and random violence are behavioral norms. For a glimpse of trends in the nation's moods and perceptions, we must study, rather, the despised commercial message.

Why? Simply this: Advertisers know that a product sells best when it is associated with images of current popularity or concern. So it is that the viewer can now see, among the many mini-dramas devoted to the single mother and her career, more and more portrayals of Dad—Dad playing with children, guiding children, cuddling baby, diapering baby, holding baby close to his sometimes naked chest. Assistant mother. Best friend.

Clearly the image of Dad is fast becoming an important marketing tool. What does that say about the public's attitudes and concerns? Does this new popularity reflect nostalgia for Dear Old Dad, by now long gone from the scene? Or does it express a nation's desperate longing to have him back again? Time and TV will tell. Stay tuned. ◆

*Olivia Vlahos is a retired professor of anthropology and the author of seven books in her field.*



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# Correspondence

*NOT EVERYONE WAS thrilled with artist John Springs' racy cover on the summer issue ("Sex and Bondage 101"), but given the news out of Washington these days, we thought it positively Victorian. An elegant line drawing of ladies in underwear? We felt—like smutty professors everywhere—that this illustration fell into the category of "erotica," not "pornography." But some of you beg to differ.*

*Reaction to other aspects of the issue was much more positive. Our editor was especially pleased by the show of solidarity from other "NO FUN mums" across the country, and would like to encourage "WAY STRICT" dads to join in our censorious little clique.*

*Please continue to send your letters to our snazzy new offices in glamorous downtown Arlington. Write to the Editor, The Women's Quarterly, P.O. Box 3058, Arlington, Virginia 22203-0058. You can also fax us at 703/558-4994, or reach us in cyberspace at iwf@iwf.org.*

## Addled judgment

I LIKE TO give the benefit of the doubt, so I'm going to guess that you were all suffering from heat prostration, and its side effect of addled brains, on the day you chose the cover illustration for the Summer 1998 issue.

To say that the cover was disappointing is as much an understatement as to say that Bill Clinton is ethically challenged. As a member of the IWF who shares most of the views expressed in TWQ, I can't believe that you pandered to the current hypersexualized marketing style that bombards us from all sides. As a mother of four children, I already have a big enough job screening newsmagazines and the daily newspaper from my still-innocent children, trying to shelter them from the very graphic images that you chose to display on the current cover. Certainly the contents of TWQ aren't kid stuff, but your covers shouldn't be something I have to hide, either.

Next time you make important editorial decisions, I hope that cooler heads will prevail.

JUDY R. GRUEN
Venice, California

## Drag a copy of TWQ through a trailer park...

HOLY COW! THE next time you send out an issue with a cover like the one on your summer issue, enclose it in a plain brown wrapper. The whole damn trailer park here is abuzz—even them Democrats in the single wides.

R. L. MATHEWS
San Diego, California

## In sync with decency

LET'S JUST SAY that there are lip syncs and there are lip syncs! When I read Danielle Crittenden's Diary in the summer issue ("The NO FUN Mum"), I was stricken by how something as innocent as a lip sync contest became such a hot issue.

My children belong to a local community swim team and we have done a lip sync contest for the past eight summers. It always proves to be a highlight of the season—especially if we are losing our meets and need something to laugh about and enjoy.

After reading Crittenden's column at bedtime, I lay awake for a long time trying to figure out the differences between her experience and mine. The difference is parental involvement. Since our swim team has 130 kids and only three coaches, the parents are the ones who make the social activities work. With the parents comes some semblance of propriety. Just off the top of my head, the songs that have been the most hilarious are "Riverdance," "If I Were a Rich Man," "Gilligan's Island," and "The Goodbye Song" from *Hello Dolly*.

This week I drove my last child (my fifth) down to Knoxville to start her second year of college. Just wait until you get to that point in your life, and then you will realize how little we can control their lives. But that is an issue best saved for another day!

MARY BELL
Springfield, Virginia

## No fun in Texas

I JUST FINISHED reading Danielle Crittenden's Diary, and all I can say is, "Amen." I cringe each time I attend a career day or Junior Achievement assignment at a local



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school campus, and see what passes for childhood these days—elementary-aged children dressed in clothing that my parents would not have allowed me to wear in high school. I was appalled when I went to see *Saving Private Ryan* (a magnificent film for adults) with my colleagues from work and saw children entering the theater.

FYI: I'm an editorial writer and columnist for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, and a recent subscriber to TWQ. While I don't always agree with each piece, I do enjoy reading them. Take care, and keep up the fight.

J.R. LABBE
Fort Worth, Texas

***Bet working moms think they're more fun, too***

MAGGIE GALLAGHER CITED a survey of at-home mothers and working mothers in which the working moms said they were doing a good job of mothering while the younger mothers at home were not so sure ("The Mommy Gap," Summer 1998). There are two plausible reasons for this:

1. Experience. Obviously, older mothers with more children would have better experience and feel more confident and better about their mothering skills.

2. Personal perception. Working mothers may simply "feel" they are doing a good job, when in reality they are not doing such a good job.

Consider.

GIVON ZIRKIND
[via e-mail]

*Poll Pourri*

# Does Everyone Lie About Sex?

## Not even your pollster knows for sure, sighs *Karlyn Bowman*

FOR THE PAPARAZZI of the polling profession, lying about sex is an area surrounded by as much controversy as the President's lies about sex.

Even when social scientists have "results" from survey questions about sexual behavior, problems of interpretation abound. Men, for example, report having more frequent sex than women. University of Maryland sociologist John Robinson says the explanation isn't that "men are more driven or boastful," it's simply demographics. One in five adults in a major sex survey by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago say they have not engaged in sex in the previous year. Widows and older women without husbands or partners dominate this group.

If we can't be confident of what individuals are willing to say about their own behavior, can we rely on what they say about other people's behavior? Here, too, the surveys raise as many questions as they try to answer. It's hard to tell from survey questions, for example, whether sexual behavior has really changed, or whether people are more willing to talk about it to survey researchers.

There is a long-standing belief in the surveys that men are more prone to temptation than women. In 1943, pollster Elmo Roper didn't even think it necessary to ask men about women's extramarital involvements. Instead, in a question that seems quaint and charming in comparison to its modern-day equivalents, women were asked (by women interviewers) whether many, only a few, or practically no men were "untrue" to their wives: some 48 percent of women said many men were, 43 percent said only a few were, and five percent said that practically none were. In 1946, when Gallup asked married women to volunteer the chief faults of their husbands, thoughtlessness topped the list, followed by bossiness and "other women." "Other men" wasn't even mentioned by men who were asked about their wives' faults. In 1950, when Gallup asked who was more easily "led astray," 40 percent said men were, 29 percent said women, and 24 percent said there was no difference. A September 1997 CBS News/48 Hours poll found that two-thirds of men and women said a man was more likely to "cheat" on a spouse than a woman.

In 1964, in the first question I have been able to find that asked people whether they knew anyone "who has an unfaithful wife or husband," 24 percent said they did. Louis Harris and Associates repeated the question three times in the 1960s, and the number edged up gradually to 41 percent in 1969. When CBS News repeated the Harris question word-forword in 1995, 58 percent said they knew of someone, and 39 percent said they did not. Are there more unfaithful people, or are we just willing to talk more openly about infidelity? The surveys can't answer the question.

Whatever we're saying (or willing to say), there has been no change in the past quarter century in the belief that extramarital sex is always wrong. In polls, around 80 percent choose the response that it is "always wrong," the most severe of the categories. The belief that premarital sexual activity and same-sex relations, however, are "always wrong" has declined over the span. ◆

*Karlyn Bowman is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.*



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oppressors. Not that anyone should be surprised. Even beef-eating, pickup-driving, sports-loving Texans can crack in the hostile living environment men face in the Quindlen Era. All that can be hoped for is that real women will realize what real men are up against, and be willing to offer this remnant a warm breast upon which to rest—and of course frolic.

The first point of empathy is this: A real man cannot pick up even a weekly newspaper without reading an account of the campaign to stamp out everything that gives his life meaning. Consider the phenomenon known as "political correctness." At one level, this is merely a continuation of the eternal campaign to bring men to heel, yet there are notable differences. One has to do with the ferocity of the attack. While men have perpetually faced attempts to wipe out smoking, chewing, boozing, cussing, and other staples of male lives, never have they been forced to fight on all these fronts simultaneously. New passions have also been taken up, such as the campaigns against scrapple eating, strapping unruly children, wolf-whistling, and hunting and fishing.

The nature of the nagging forces has also changed, now consisting of women who wield much more power than their nagging forebears (all the better to legislate with), plus a growing cadre of male collaborators. A perfect example is Hubert Humphrey III, who not too long ago stood on the grave of Joe (not Josephine) Camel and delivered a death threat against the Budweiser Frogs (all of whom are clearly male). The President is the same way with his unsmoked cigars, though recent events do suggest an alternative explanation for why the stogies remained unlit. Similarly, the animal-rights movement, which is primarily led and populated by women, puts forward males such as Paul McCartney to advance its agenda, which is motivated by the simple fact that these activists cannot abide men who like to hunt, fish, ride bulls, and occasionally take in the diving horse act at the county fair. Mark Twain, who smoked, drank, and cussed in heroic proportions, represented this threat in the characters of Aunts Polly and Sarah, who drove Huck and Tom into the wilderness.

The problem today is that there is no frontier to which a man can escape. In fact, he cannot even enter the men's room without encountering a baby changing table, a truly evil instrument of forced domesticity. It happens that there are no known instances of these tables being used for anything other than coat racks or temporary cocktail tables, but the message is still clear: You cannot escape us.

The assault on maleness is not restricted to fully grown men, which brings us to the most terrifying aspect of the crusade. In the pursuit of making every boy grow up to be like Mister Rogers (a process once known as emasculation), we have seen the blossoming of the "Attention Deficit Disorder" craze. As ADD expert Dr. David Hancock points out, this questionable diagnosis "has been associated with several different behavioral patterns such as excessive movement, aggression, unpredictability, impatience, short attention span"—in other words, behavior typical of young males. I was unable to get any official sort of tabulation as to whether most "victims" of ADD are boys, though a therapist with experience in this field told me that boys make up the bulk of children diagnosed with ADD, whose numbers have grown from 500,000 in 1988 to four million by 1996. Diagnosis is the first step. The second is a large-scale doping, a sort of pharmaceutical carpet bombing of the male psyche, generally with Ritalin. *Pediatrics* magazine reported that Ritalin usage increased some 250 percent between 1990 and 1995. A United Nations panel disclosed that worldwide production of Ritalin increased from three tons in 1990 to 8.5 tons in 1994, with 90 percent being ingested in the United States.

Of course, boys will be boys, which means plenty of them are selling the dope to their classmates, at least when they're not overdosing on it. The Drug Enforcement Agency reported that Ritalin overdoses in children ages ten to fourteen increased tenfold between 1990 and 1995, matching the number of reported cocaine overdoses.

There seems to be no end to the bad news. In August, David I. Perrett, of the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, created a panic in the testosterone community by reporting that nature itself is slowly transforming men into women, at least in their facial characteristics. The prospect that their descendants would all look like Liberace was enough to make many real men take a second look at celibacy. Yet closer investigation offers something of a ray of hope. As Perrett explained, women are increasingly attracted to "female" facial features rather than "male" characteristics (perhaps reflecting an innate vanity), and so Mother Nature, far from emasculating men, may instead be ensuring their future sexual success, as she did when evolving earlier engines of conquest such as the sports car and the etching. Mother Nature, it appears, remains a male collaborator.

Just now, however, real men are an increasingly lonely bunch, and are in



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dire need of support by the aforementioned real women—whose bosoms grow cold at the sight of males going about with diaper bags over their shoulders, and who are not offended when their men disappear into the woods with gun bearers and beer sherpas for weekends of hunting, fishing, and rhetorical bawdiness. Quite the contrary. They prefer a man who will howl at the moon, and who wakes them in the middle of the night not to tell them he just had a scary dream, but to propose blood-boiling mischief. These women—dare we call them babes? —are heroines of our age, scorned by the nags for sleeping with "the oppressors" when in fact they have taken up with the dashing boys of the resistance.

Toward them real men should show appreciation. No one need get blubbery, but instead broadcast affection in a subtle but deeply meaningful way. Some may even try making a serious attempt to raise the toilet seat. Greater love hath no (real) man. ◆

*Dave Shiflett contributes to the* American Spectator, *among other publications.*

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this is not simply an American fascination. There is a tradition of Western romanticism that has long glorified the natural at the expense of the artificial. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," said Keats of a Grecian urn in one of the most beautiful and false lines ever written. In fact, civilization rests on artifice. We all know what human beings—and particularly men—are "really" like. The point is to bring us out of that misbegotten state. Manners, as Judith Martin always reminds us, reflect morals. Pretense helps make social interaction possible. If we told everybody what we "really" felt about them, society would quickly turn into a bar-room brawl.

Similarly, the development of aesthetic sensibilities is part of developing civilization. To put together colors, shapes, sights, sounds, and movements in a thoughtful and complex manner, and to appreciate the resulting art, music, and dance, is to enrich and ennoble the life of a society. The Grecian urn Keats admired was hardly functional or "authentic." One could drink water as easily out of a lumpen clay pot. The idyllic scenes of love painted on it were surely stylized. Perhaps that is why they moved him so.

But as between style and substance, the former gets a bum rap. After all, the story of Romeo and Juliet is corny, and was told hundreds of times. It was Shakespeare's way of retelling it—his style—that made his play a work of art. What distinguishes one painter from another? Not the subject; every Renaissance painter churned out his version of Madonna and Child. Form and technique marked the work of the greatest artists. Perhaps Jackson Pollack and the other abstract expressionists thought they were being "honest" when they splattered their canvasses with paint; the results speak for themselves. When was the last time that "Red and White on Green" made your heart miss a beat?

Most of us can't write like Shakespeare, paint like Bellini, or move like Barishnikov. But we could dress, speak, and behave, well, like gentlemen. And we could learn to dance. ◆

*Fareed Zakaria is the wine columnist for the on-line magazine* Slate.

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on a view of women as individuals, connected by mutal political interests, not by marital status. The politics that are supposed to unite us, in the eyes of feminist groups, are Democratic—abortion, welfare, government-sponsored day care. It is why these feminists have rushed to the aid of a Democratic president, even though he has violated all their previous definitions of sexual exploitation.

But women as a group are not—and cannot—be united along political lines. Women's individual beliefs, like men's, are wildly diverse, and can't be neatly marshalled behind one political party. We have an interest, though, in being united in our support for marriage. Women still have the most to lose when marriages collapse. Even today, despite all our vaunted financial independence, wives are poorer than husbands after divorce, and we are most often the ones left struggling to raise our children alone.

The women's groups have lost sight of this. They have chosen, oddly enough, to align themselves with the adulterer and his mistress against the wife and daughter. The apathy of female public opinion shows that women have opted for this same alignment. By not forcefully condemning the President's behavior, we are tacitly condoning it.

And that is why this scandal is not simply about one man's private sex life. Those who will suffer most from this sea change in women's attitudes won't simply be Mrs. Clinton and Chelsea—it will be all wives and daughters.

*~ Danielle Crittenden*



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*One last observation . . .*

# Bike Like a Man

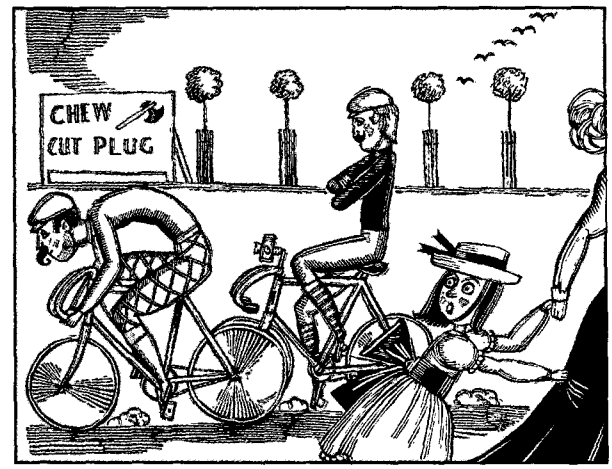
## *Elizabeth Powers* on the pseudo-men in her Manhattan neighborhood

TWO VERSIONS OF current manliness as seen on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where I live:

Since the Upper West Side is probably one of the most liberal neighborhoods in the country, one might expect the behavior of males to be affected by the prevailing condition of conspicuous virtuousness. Besides the number of men with ponytails, earrings, *and* purses—and I don't mean backpacks—slung over the shoulder, straight men also show their virtue by kissing one another when meeting in public places. It exceeds the European style of cheek-pecking (which I always thought was reserved in France for males and females or females and females): they actually plant their lips on each other's cheeks. Then they proceed to order specialty drinks, like watermelon margaritas. These men look as if they wouldn't dream of saying anything to make a woman think they didn't fully support her right to an abortion or, should she wish, use them as sperm donors. In fact they are so docile they seem unable to chat up attractive single women who are sitting alone at the bar.

The second version of manliness is encountered on weekends in Central Park, which closes to cars and becomes a teeming playground for adults. This version is the antagonistic runner, skater, or cyclist who bears down upon me as I make my slow way up an incline. I've given up hoping that he might move aside for me, and so I leap out of his path to avoid getting whacked. Interestingly, this type never gets within a mile of my husband, who runs a few feet ahead of or beside me. From what can be gathered of their socioeconomic status from sweaty running clothes, these are mostly Yuppie men, or males who once would have counted themselves in the gentleman class.

Contrast this with a society that is not so well ordered as ours, that of medieval Scotland as represented by Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, a play I like to teach to undergraduates. It's fiction, it's true, but contrary to conventional wisdom, the play shows that reflections on the proper behavior of men have a long history. Macbeth is accused by his wife of unmanliness for hesitating to kill their guest in cold blood ("When you durst do it, then you were a man"). The play goes on to reveal the couple's headlong loss of humanity for doing so. Macduff, on the other hand, hearing of the murder of his wife and children by Macbeth's henchmen ("All my pretty ones? Did you say all?"), is counseled by Malcolm not to give in to his grief: "Dispute it like a man." To which Macduff replies: "I shall do so; but I must also feel it as a man. I cannot but remember such things were, that were most precious to me." And after that he goes out and does the manly thing, killing Macbeth.




IT'S HARD TO say how representative the Upper West Side is, though it's scary to contemplate that its behavior may be trend-setting for the rest of the country. Conciliatoriness toward women's different needs (dare one say "nature" anymore?) has devolved into docility, while masculine strength is manifested as cowardly pugnacity. Sexual equality seems to mean that in social situations, men will behave like women; when unmonitored, they will expect women to take it like men.

In a well-regulated society like ours, in which the police generally carry out their duties with efficiency, women will have little to be afraid of. But what is lost in this ruthless androgyny is the common life to which the best efforts of men and women are ideally devoted. ●

*Elizabeth Powers is a regular contributor to* Commentary.



*Detail from a woodcut by John Held Jr.* 

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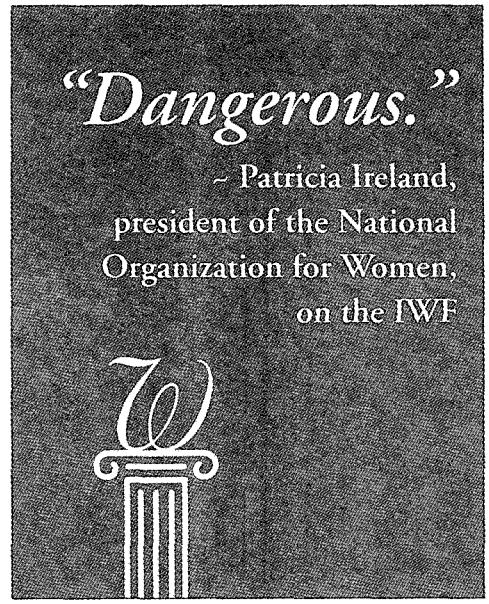
FOR THE PAST six years, the Independent Women's Forum has been taking on the old establishment of feminist organizations—and winning. "The IWF has a profile almost unheard of for a group that is the new kid on the block," writes the *Boston Globe*. "In the marketplace of ideas, from the national news media all the way down to local radio, the IWF has shown its real strength....[The] IWF is well on its way to becoming the foremost media nemesis of the feminist movement."

Why has the IWF been so successful? Because the women who make up the IWF are not radical ideologues—they're businesswomen, economists, lawyers, truck drivers, and also mothers. Because the IWF promotes individual responsibility, strong families, limited government, and opportunity—policies that help *all* Americans. Because the IWF, a nonpartisan, nonprofit Washington organization, sponsors speaker events and conferences noted for their provocative and free-ranging debates. And because the IWF publishes *The Women's Quarterly*—an intellectual antidote to *Ms.*—which syndicated columnist Mona Charen praises as, "My type of women's magazine! With humor and sarcasm but also with warmth and passion, these women offer an intelligent refutation of the leading feminist nonsense that is swallowed so uncritically by the mainstream press."

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